

Message Text

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20/22

ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 IO-13 DHA-02 VO-03 SCA-01 CIAE-00

INSE-00 DODE-00 SY-05 DEAE-00 /034 W

----- 026390

R 051008Z AUG 76

FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5893

INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SINGAPORE 3713

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA TWO)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF, SN

SUBJ: VIETNAMESE ABOARD CAPE ERIMO: UNHCR ACTIVITY

REFS: A. KUALA LUMPUR 4467; B. SINGAPORE 3677

1. AT EMBASSY'S REQUEST, UNHCR REP SAMPATKUMAR DID APPROACH GOS ON FIRST PORT OF CALL PRINCIPLE (REF A, PARA 2), BUT INITIAL GOS POSITION WAS THAT SHIP HAD NOT YET ENTERED THE PORT OF SINGAPORE. ACTUALLY THERE MAY BE SOME QUESTION WHETHER FIRST PORT OF CALL PRINCIPLE IS ACTUALLY INVOLVED SINCE SHIP WAS NOT SCHEDULED TO STOP IN SINGAPORE TO DISCHARGE CARGO AND SHIP'S AGENTS ONLY WISHED TO HAVE IT ENTER HARBOR TO PERMIT REFUGEES TO DISEMBARK. GOS REJECTED THIS REQUEST AND SHIP HAS REMAINED OVER TWO MILES OFFSHORE CLOSE TO THE MAIN SHIPPING CHANNEL. IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS NOW CLAIM THAT SHIP IS NOT IN SINGAPORE TERRITORIAL WATERS (THIS POINT IS DEBATABLE). GOS HAS DISCOURAGED SHIP'S AGENT FROM BRINGING SHIP INTO THE HARBOR AND AGENT HAS NOT SOUGHT TO PRESS THIS MATTER.

2. HANDLING OF THIS CASE BY UNHCR REP SAMPATKUMAR HAS BEEN QUITE UNINSPIRED, ALTHOUGH HE DID MAKE REPRESENTATIONS TO GOS HE CONFIDENTIAL

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TENDED TO ACT AS IF HE WAS TRYING TO RECONCILE USG AND GOS POSITIONS RATHER THAN ASSERTING THE VIEWS OF UNHCR ITSELF. ALTHOUGH HE BECAME CONVINCED OF THE FUTILITY OF PERSUADING THE GOS TO MODIFY ITS POSITION, HE DID NOT GIVE A CANDID

ASSESSMENT TO THE SHIPPING AGENTS INVOLVED, WHICH TENDED TO HEIGHTEN THEIR HOPES FOR A SPEEDY COMPROMISE. ONLY AFTER EMBOFF SUGGESTED POSSIBILITY DID SAMPATKUMAR REQUEST UNHCR GENEVA TO APPROACH GOS REPRESENTATIVE THERE. WE UNDERSTAND THIS APPROACH HAS BEEN MADE.

3. SHIPPING AGENTS DID MAKE CONCRETE OFFER OF A BOND TO GOS IMMIGRATION AUTHORITIES ON AUGUST 4, AND WERE TOLD IT WOULD BE ACCEPTED ONLY IF ACCOMPANIED BY A LETTER OF GUARANTEE BY THE GOVERNMENT.

4. EMBASSY BELIEVES IT IS MOST UNLIKELY THAT GOS WILL MODIFY ITS HARD LINE POSITION UNLESS USG OR SOME OTHER GOVERNMENT AGREES UNCONDITIONALLY TO ACCEPT REFUGEES PRIOR TO DEBARKATION. WHILE GOS MIGHT CONCEIVABLY RESPOND TO STRONG HIGH LEVEL APPROACHES FROM SEVERAL GOVERNMENTS IN SUPPORT OF UNHCR REPRESENTATIONS OR BEND IN THE FACE OF SERIOUS ADVERSE INTERNATIONAL PUBLICITY WE ARE INCLINED TO DOUBT IT. GOS HAS BEEN SINGULARLY UNRESPONSIVE TO SUCH PRESSURES OR THE POSSIBILITY OF POTENTIAL ADVERSE PUBLICITY SINCE THIS ISSUE FIRST AROSE MORE THAN A YEAR AGO FOLLOWING THE FALL OF SAIGON.
GRANT

CONFIDENTIAL

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